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STATEMENT FROM MISSISSIPPI REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIRMAN
JIM HERRING

"Yesterday, the Clarion-Ledger published an article describing the Mississippi Republican Party as 'dysfunctional.' This sort of name calling is unworthy of Mississippi's leading newspaper. In fact, the Mississippi Republican Party is the only political party in this state that is fighting to preserve the principles that made this country great.

"The Clarion-Ledger gives much credence to a so-called study by the Stennis Institute of Government. Since this study was paid for by the same foundation that advocates an increase in tobacco taxes, how can anyone expect its conclusions to be fair?

"This study includes many remarkable statements, some of which have been overlooked by the Clarion-Ledger. On page 86 of the study it states that the revenue from an increased tobacco tax should decline over time and that it should not be considered a stable source of revenue in the future. Page 112 states that, if the grocery tax is reduced, another tax system will have to be found in the future to replace the sales tax on food or tax revenues will decline. So, then, the Clarion-Ledger's advocacy of cutting the sales tax on food is nothing more than a stalking horse for increased taxes on something else later.

"Regardless of the insults hurled at the outstanding public servants who are consistent and reliable on this issue by this newspaper, the fact remains that toying with the tax code in time of fiscal uncertainty is risky and irresponsible.

"The Clarion-Ledger's relentless pursuit of tax increases in the early 1980s is a primary reason sales taxes are 7 percent today. Now, ironically, they want to cut a tax they once advocated raising.

"This study also states that we do not know how much the state collects in grocery taxes every year, so an increase in tobacco taxes may not be enough to cover what is lost in the grocery tax. If the Clarion-Ledger wants serious tax reform, let's do a logical analysis of the entire system and all of the funding components of state revenue, and then come up with a comprehensive proposal, not a piecemeal approach.

"I will continue to depend on Governor Barbour and our state's leaders to govern and the Clarion-Ledger to distort, manipulate, and misinform."